

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3086

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 6137

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - T E X T (P A R A 2 .)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, SA

SUBJECT: THE INCREASING ROLE OF KING KHALED IN FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS

REF: (A) JIDDA 7620 (B) JIDDA 7577 (C) JIDDA 7619 (D) JIDDA 3436

SUMMARY: LETTERS FROM KING KHALED TO PRESIDENT CARTER HAVE BEGUN TO INDICATE TO US (1) AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE OF HIS MAJESTY IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS: (2) THE PERCEPTION OF A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE KING AND THE PRESIDENT WHICH MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR EITHER TO FAIL TO RESPOND TO A REQUEST OF THE OTHER.

FOR THAT REASON THE LETTER OF THE KING TO THE PRESIDENT ON YAR MAY WARRANT MORE THAN ORDINARY ATTENTION. END SUMMARY

1. AT THE TIME OF HIS ACCESSION, IT WAS GENERALLY ASSUMED THAT KING KHALED WOULD BE LARGELY A FIGUREHEAD, WITH CROWN PRINCE FAHD BEING THE REAL DECISION-MAKER IN FOREIGN RELATIONS. THIS HAS NOT PROVED TO BE ENTIRELY THE CASE. PART OF THE REASON MAY BE THAT KING KHALED'S HEALTH HAS IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY FROM THE PARLOUS STATE IT WAS IN ONLY 18 MONTHS AGO. THE RESULT HAS BEEN A KING WHO HAS PLAYED A MORE ACTIVE ROLE THAN WAS EXPECTED, AND
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HIS PARTICIPATION IN MATTERS INVOLVING USG HAS BECOME ESPECIALLY NOTICEABLE.

2. WE CITE THE FOLLOWING AS EXAMPLES:

(A) THE DECISION TO FREEZE OIL PRICES (REFS A AND D) WAS BASICALLY THE KING'S. THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT IT WAS MADE BECAUSE OF THE PERSONAL REQUEST MADE BY PRESIDENT CARTER.

(B) AT A CRITICAL STAGE IN THE F-15 MATTER, THE KING SENT THE PRESIDENT A LETTER WHICH EMPHASIZED THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE OF THAT TRANSACTION TO HIM (REF C). THE IMPORTANCE OF THE KING'S INVOLVEMENT AND ITS FUTURE EFFECT IS NOTED IN MY MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT (7810175).

(C) THE SAUDI SUPPORT OF THE CAMP DAVID SUMMIT HAS BEEN FAR GREATER THAN WE ANTICIPATED. THE INITIAL STATEMENT OF SUPPORT, THE VISIT OF PRICNE TURKI TO AMMAN, DAMASCUS AND BAGHDAD CLIMAXED BY THE KING'S LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT REPRESENT AN UNPRECEDENTED INVOLVEMENT BY THE KING IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT' EFFORTS. LETTER FROM KING KHALED TO THE PRESIDENT REQUESTING SUPPORT FOR YEMEN MAY WELL BE THE SUBTLE ARAB WAY OF ASKING FOR A

QUID PRO QUO FOR THE SUMMIT SUPPORT. PRINCE SAUD HAS SAID ON AT LEAST TWO OCCASIONS THAT YAR PRESENTS A MORE IMPORTANT PROBLEM THAN DOES THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT.

3. COMMENT: THE KING AND HIS ADVISERS FEEL COMFORTABLE IN COMMUNICATING WITH THE PRESIDENT, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT INVOLVES ISSUES WHICH LEND THEMESELVES TO OLD FASHIONED HORSE TRADING (OVERSIMPLIFICATION BUT ILLUSTRATIVE - OIL FREEZE FOR F-15; SUPPORT FOR SUMMIT FOR COMMITMENT IN YEMEN TO COUNTER SOVIET INSPIRED THREAT).

4. WE CAN CONTINUE TO USE THIS APPORACH SPARINGLY BUT EFFECTIVE-
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LY ON ISSUES OF MAJOR CONCERN. HOWEVER, TO MAINTAIN THE EFFECTIVENESS WE MUST BE AS RESPONSIVE AS POSSIBLE TO ANY OF THE KING'S REQUESTS, INCLUDING YEMEN.
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